

**TESTIMONY OF TOM SWAN**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CONNECTICUT CITIZEN ACTION GROUP (CCAG)**

**February 27, 2019**

**BEFORE THE**

**S.B. 53 AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTORAL PRIVILEGES FOR INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS**

**S.B. 156 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE AND ABSENTEE VOTING**

**S.B. 479 AN ACT DESIGNATING ELECTION DAY AS A STATE HOLIDAY**

**S.B. 914 AN ACT CONCERNING DISCLOSURE OF COORDINATED AND INDEPENDENT POLITICAL SPENDING**

**S.B. 918 AN ACT CONCERNING SUPPLEMENTAL GRANTS FOR CERTAIN CANDIDATES UNDER THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM**

**H.B. 7210 AN ACT CONCERNING CAMPAIGN CONSULTANTS AND COORDINATION**

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox and other members of the Committee my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group. On behalf of our thousands of members statewide I want to thank you for raising various proposals today to strengthen our democracy.

CCAG supports S.B. 53 AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTORAL PRIVILEGES FOR INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS as part of our belief that voting is a right and that universal suffrage is a cornerstone of a democracy.

CCAG support S.B. 156 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE AND ABSENTEE VOTING and think that allowing for people to request absentee ballots on line is a good idea. It is time this simple step is enacted to help modernize our elections.

S.B. 479 AN ACT DESIGNATING ELECTION DAY AS A STATE HOLIDAY is a common-sense proposal whose time has come. It will encourage greater participation in our elections and that is a very good thing. Making Election Day a holiday will make it easier for people to vote, elevate the importance of voting and serve as a great counter point to the voter suppression push being advanced nationally.

CCAG strongly supports S.B. 914 AN ACT CONCERNING DISCLOSURE OF COORDINATED AND INDEPENDENT POLITICAL SPENDING. The activist right-wing US Supreme Court has made a variety of rulings (Buckley, Citizen United, McCutcheon) that undermine the principle of one person one vote by increasing importance of money in politics. Connecticut's creation of the Citizen Election program is a nationally recognized model that has had bipartisan support, but these and other court decisions continue to present challenges to protect the program and you are hearing bills today to help do this.

During the last election cycle CCAG and Common Cause CT decided to try and monitor how outside money was trying to subvert the CEP, give particular candidates an advantage, and how various interest groups would try to curry favor with their so called independent expenditures. We have released a series of reports. These included:

\* [Who is buying our Election: A Pre-Election Guide to Connecticut's Super PACs](#)

\* [An update on that report](#)

\* [Who is Buying Our Education System: Charter School Super PACs in Connecticut](#)

We are hoping to release at least two more reports this Spring. We have seen abuses by both parties. Governor Malloy's use of Federal party accounts in 2014 is something we did not hesitate in critiquing; however, in 2018 we saw much more abuse of outside entities by the Republican candidate for Governor and the Senate Republican campaign committee. Much of their fundraising was outsourced to national committees that circumvented Connecticut's contribution limits and disclosure laws. This should concern all of us regardless of party.

SB 914 is an effort to ensure voters have more of an opportunity to know where dirty money is coming from and limit its ability to undermine our democracy. It is based on a national proposal that has more cosponsors in Congress than are needed to for it pass. Connecticut should continue to lead on campaign finance issues and pass SB 914.

When we originally passed the CEP, it included triggers that would give participating candidates additional money up to the amount of their original grant to match any independent expenditures or self-funders up to that level. The activist right-wing court struck down these triggers. S.B. 918 AN ACT CONCERNING SUPPLEMENTAL GRANTS FOR CERTAIN CANDIDATES UNDER THE CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM is a common-sense approach to try to live up to the original intent of CEP and limit the ability of dirty money sources to buy our elections.

Finally, we also support H.B. 7210 AN ACT CONCERNING CAMPAIGN CONSULTANTS AND COORDINATION. There needs to be greater disclosure of the activities of consultants. There are some consultants that try to hide how the money they collect is used in order gain a political advantage and questions have been raised about how the money some consultants have charged is being spent.

Thank you for your consideration.